

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS CHRISTMAS NUMBER

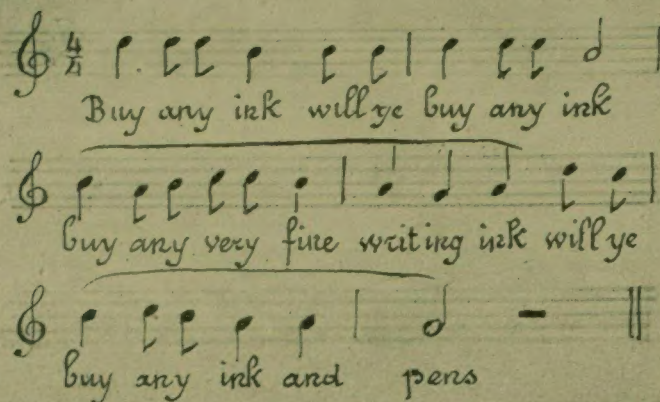


A CHAT WITH THE GIANTS.
FROM THE PAINTING, "BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS," BY FRED ROE, R.I.
(Exhibited at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours.)

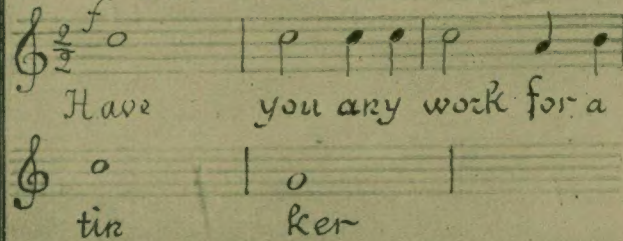
Among the interesting features contained in this issue are reproductions of "Doubles," by the famous caricaturist and writer Mr. Max Beerbohm, which suggest a new game for Christmas-time.



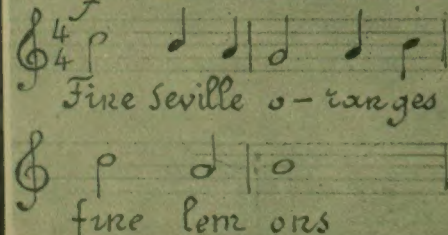
The Pen and Ink Seller.



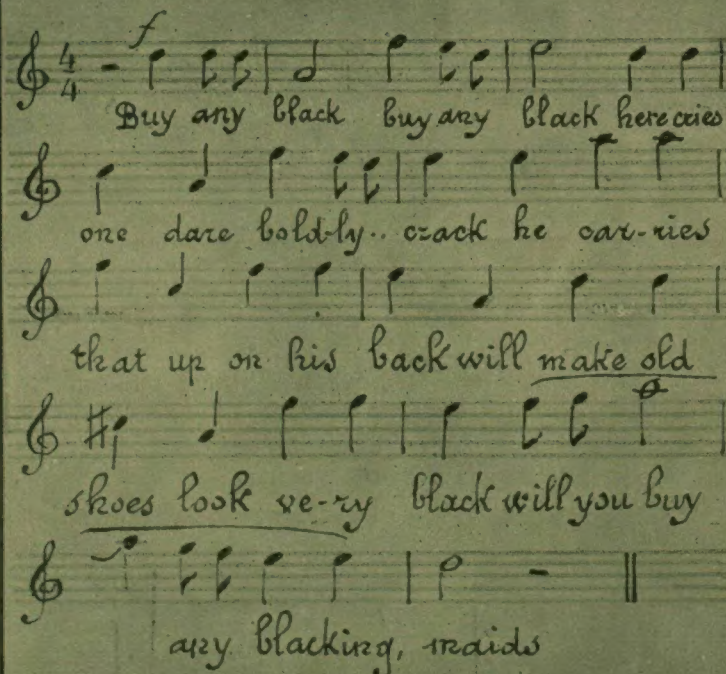
The Tinker.



The Orange and Lemon Seller.



The Milkwoman.



The Blacking Seller.

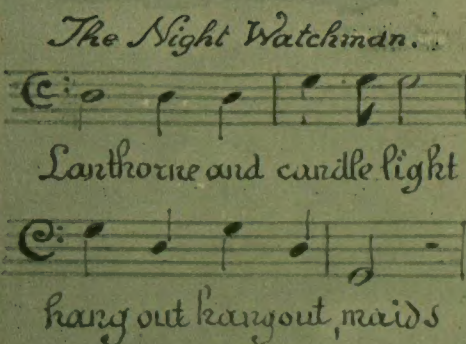
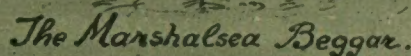
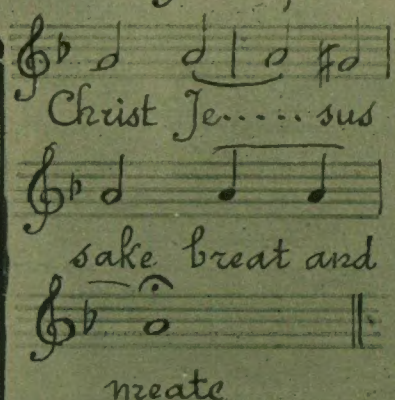
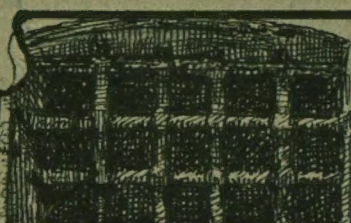
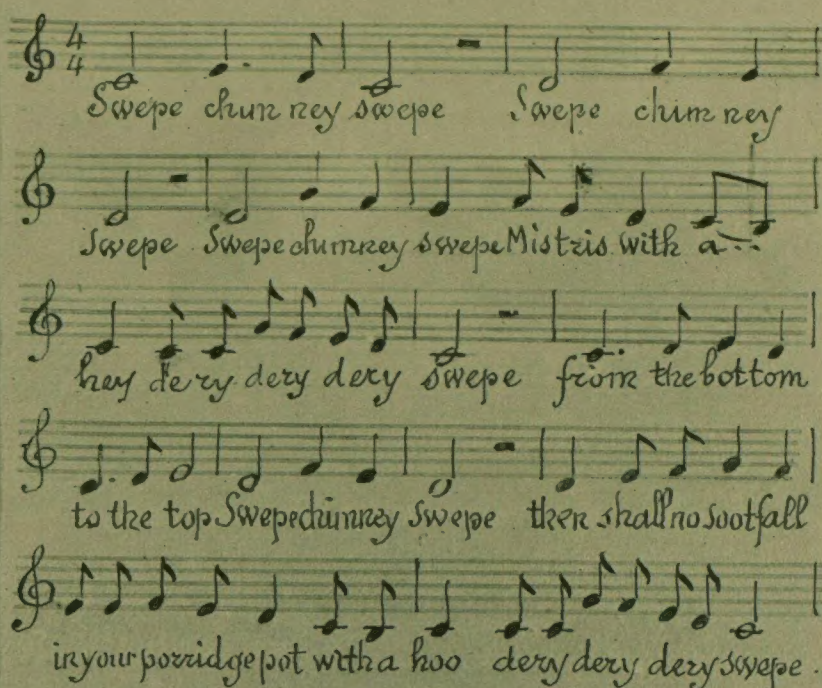
LONDON CRIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY.

The quaint old "Cries of London" in the days of Shakespeare (illustrated on this and the following pages) are published by Messrs. Novello in three numbers of their Collection of Part-Songs, Glee and Madrigals, from a manuscript in the British Museum. The three numbers contain

respectively the original musical settings by Thomas Weelkes (circa 1578 to 1623), Orlando Gibbons (1583 to 1625), and Richard Deering, who died in 1630. All three have been edited by Sir Frederick Bridge, C.V.O., the well-known organist of Westminster Abbey, who has made

Drawn by A. FORESTIER FROM MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE, C.V.O.

[Continued opposite.]



LONDON CRIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY.

Continued.

[Continued.]
this fascinating subject his own. He is now writing a book upon it, to be published shortly, which is sure to attract wide interest. "The Mendicants of this great city," says Charles Lamb in his essay on "The Decay of Beggars," "were so many of her sights, her lions. I can no

more spare them than I could the Cries of London." Two centuries earlier, Shakespeare must often have met such characters as those here illustrated. Lecturing recently on "The Cries of London which Children Heard in Shakespeare's Time," Sir Frederick Bridge said: "The little boys

[Continued overleaf.

DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER FROM MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE, C.V.O.



The Pedler and Skin-buyer.

What convey skins have ye maydes?

Sweet Juniper Juniper Will ye
buy my bunch of Ju-ni-per?



The Tooth-drawer.

Touch and goe Touch & goe Hays
work for Kindheart the tooth-drawer? touch &
goe!



The Cooper.

A coop-er I am and have been
long and looping is my trade and
married I am to as pretty a wench as
ev-er God hath made Have ye
work for a coop-er?



Sweet Juniper



The Bellows-mender.

Have you an-y old
bel-lows to mend



The Spout-Seller.

My spouts my spouts two pence a peck two pence a peck two pence a peck
at Melford stairs

Hot... nut for pies hot



The Reman



Cheese and Cream

I have fresh cheese and cream I have
fresh



Cherries Ripe.

Brooms brooms brooms old shoes
pouch rings or buskins for green
brooms



The Broom-Seller.

Cherries ripe ripe ripe

LONDON CRIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S DAY.

[Continued]
and girls of 300 years ago lived in a town of narrow streets which were enlivened the whole day and part of the night, not by motor-horns and omnibus-bells, but by the cries of people who sold vegetables, fish, milk, salt, brooms, and numberless other things. They sang them to quaint little musical tunes: for those were the great times of Elizabeth, when our musicians were the best in the world. . . . The quiet of the night was broken only by the watchman with his 'God give you good morrow, my masters! Past 3 o'clock and a fine morning!' But after that the cries succeeded one another rapidly. They

were of great number and variety, and many have been rescued for us by three composers, contemporaries of Shakespeare, each of whom wrote a composition for a little string orchestra and chorus. To-day London still hears certain cries, but they are raucous and unmusical, and we could spare them well enough. Perhaps a time may come again when, in the words of a modern poet, 'The hawker will not bawl, But in a voice ethereal Will tell the street It cannot beat His superfine material.'—[DRAFTED BY A. FORSTER FROM MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY SIR FREDERICK BRIDGE, C.V.O.]



HER FUR COAT

BY
ALICIA RAMSEY

ILLUSTRATED BY
W. R. S. STOTT

HE was tall. He was rich. He was bald. He was inclined to be fat—he puffed considerably if he lost his temper, or when he hoisted himself in and out of his limousine. Likewise he had deep pouches of wrinkled flesh under his weary eyes.

Ominous things, puffings and pouches—so the doctor had said at their interview that morning. Nothing to be alarmed about, but it meant cutting down good dinners and walking at least two miles a day.

Clever fellow, that doctor! Any man who could sit in his chair and charge you fifty dollars a touch for telling you what you knew already, and get away with it, was a man worth listening to.

He'd listened all right. He'd phoned his wife to change the menu, and he'd made up his mind to do his couple of miles a day.

That's why he was walking now. Dragging himself wearily along frozen Broadway, with his Rolls-Royce tagging along behind him in case he got tired.

As he walked—he hated walking—he thought about his dinner that night. It soothed his irritation and helped to pass the time a bit to guess what he was going to eat.

Not vegetable purée, he hoped—he hated vegetables. Tomato bisque, now, with little crisp croûtons floating about in the fragile two-handled cups—that was something like soup. He loved tomato bisque.

What was that the doctor had said again about tomatoes? He pulled the printed list of prohibited things out of his pocket and gave it a surreptitious glance. Tomatoes headed the list! In Heaven's name, why not tomatoes? Tomatoes were vegetables, weren't they? *Too acid?* He shrugged his great shoulders impatiently. All right, then. *Not tomato bisque.*

Then what? What about crème d'artichauts? Artichokes were in season just now. Right! Crème d'artichauts and filleted sole to follow, and a delicately browned chicken as roast. Poor stuff, chicken! He much preferred duck. However, it couldn't be helped.

And for salad—what was it the doctor had said about salad? He pulled out the list again and took another surreptitious look. What! No salads! Hang it all, a dinner wasn't a dinner without a salad. It was the thing he loved best of all.

What did the old fool propose one should eat instead of salad? Stewed prunes and rice? A baked apple without sugar or cream. Good God! One might be back in the nursery again. His wife would have to do better than that.

At the thought of his wife—tall and thin, with her marcelled hair and her manicured hands; never a spot or a hair out of place; with her mouth like a trap and her eyes as hard as the diamonds round her carefully massaged neck—at the thought of his wife, his face went grim.

Twenty-two years of it, come next March. Twenty-two years of it, by Heck! and no sign of a let up yet. Lord! How he hated his wife!

Dashed fine housekeeper, all the same; give the Devil his due. She'd manage a good dinner somehow. She'd wangle the doctor. She always wangled everyone—even him.

How about iced apricots and vanilla cream instead of apples and rice? Instead of that God-forsaken chicken, what about a young turkey with chestnut stuffing and celery sauce?

Cheered by the thought of the chestnut stuffing, he walked on.

One block—two blocks—three blocks—four . . .

Good Lord! he felt as if he'd been walking for hours, and he hadn't walked a half-mile yet! Another fifteen blocks to go before he could even turn back, and he was worn out already. It wasn't the walking that tired one so much; it was his fur coat.

Idiotic things, fur coats, when you came to think of it. Yet if you hadn't one, with these infernal winds blowing the breath out of your body, and all this snow about, you'd catch your death of cold.

What was that the doctor had said? "Can't afford to monkey with yourself with a high blood-pressure like that. Above all things, don't catch cold."

At this rate, one might as well be dead and done with it. Why not? What was life, anyway? Telephones. Conferences. Chauffeurs. Wives. And now, as if that wasn't enough, by Heck!—cut out all salads and walk two miles at least every day . . .

Puffing, panting; slipping, sliding; cursing the doctor; cursing his wife; thinking of food—he walked on.

Five blocks; six blocks; seven blocks; eight. . . . If he walked another step he'd lie down on the side-walk and pass out. Eight blocks saw him all right. . . .

He was just turning round to hail his car, when his eye caught sight of the great placards outside the theatre he was passing, and he stopped short to look.

"FLORODORA."

GREAT REVIVAL OF WORLD-FAMOUS PLAY.

RAVISHING BEAUTIES.

DELICIOUS MELODIES.

GORGEOUS COSTUMES.

CELEBRATED SEXTETTE.

EVERYTHING AS IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION.

N.B.—Those of you who never saw it before, come in and see it now.
Those of you who saw it before, step in and

RENEW YOUR YOUTH.

Renew your youth!

He stood outside in the biting wind and read the placard over and over again. The people pushed and shoved him as they streamed down the street, but he didn't notice the people. The snow came whiffing and whuffling round the corner up from the river, catching his breath, stinging his face with thousands of little splinters like sharp glass, but he didn't notice the snow.

His great, overfed body, in its sumptuous sables, stood on Broadway, but his spirit was far away, standing outside the shabby old theatre in Boston, looking with eager, ardent young eyes at the dirty old placards of "Florodora," wondering, if he skimmed on lunches and went short on teas, if he would be able to scrape up enough to go in and see the show again.

"Now then," boomed the big commissioner in his long green coat and his big brass buttons, "now then, you're blocking up the side-walk, there! Pass on, please! Pass on!"

But he didn't even hear the nigger's plaintive bellowing. He was looking at the coloured pictures of the celebrated Sextette, with their slim legs and their rosy hats, standing with linked arms in a semi-circle of youthful beauty and joy.

The little one at the end—the sixth one—had got her arms full of roses. The sixth one! Good God! The sixth one! It seemed to him she smiled.

With a swift, sharp movement he turned back to the side-walk and held up his hand. The car drew up to the kerb. The big commissioner, scenting tips from the sables, left off his bellowing and rushed forward to open the door.

"Going in," he scowled at the commissioner. "Wait," he told the chauffeur.

He left them standing in the snow and disappeared through the swinging doors.

It was matinée day at popular prices, and the vestibule was thronged, but that made no difference to him. He shoved and pushed his way through the crowd as he had shoved and pushed his way through life. Even the arrogant young New Yorkers gave way instinctively before that forbidding jowl and the sable coat.

"Gimme a box," said he.

Unhappily, the last box had long since been sold.

"Then gimme a stall."

Alas! there wasn't a stall to be had.

"Then gimme a seat!"

"Standing room only, Sir," said the smart young man in the box office.

"Aw, hell!" said he, and threw down a ten-dollar bill. "Gimme a pass and keep the change. Standing room's good enough for me."

He snatched up the little metal disc and disappeared.

The young man in the box office, who knew his New York, had recognised the heavy face and the weary eyes at first glance. He rushed round to the back to tell the particular girl he'd got his own eye on, who was in front.

"Now's your chance, Girlie," he whispered excitedly, drawing the leader of the Sextette aside. "Now's your chance! If you can get HIM going, you can eat pearls for porridge if you're as ugly as sin, and sing Marguerite at the Metropolitan if you've a voice like a crow!"

The leader of the Sextette, a sumptuous young Jewess with lustrous eyes and hennaed head, snapped her fingers covered with enormous diamond and pearl rings in the excited young man's face. "I should worry," said she. "Where is the old Bird?"

"Left hand wide. Way down front. As high as the Woolworth Building, and a face like a lemon gone wrong. You can't miss him, Girlie. Play up for all you're worth!" He left her standing with her nose glued to the peep-hole and rushed back to the front to glue his eye on the man at whose coming the great gods of Wall Street got down off their golden pedestals and bowed the knee as he passed by.

He stood as he had stood twenty years before, first on one foot, then on the other, leaning his great bulk against the wall. He could hardly contain himself until the show began.

Bang, Bang, Bang! went the drums. Tetum, tetum, tetum! went the violins. The lights went down. The curtain went up. He was so enthralled he forgot all about his feet. He wasn't puffing at all. His heart began to beat.

He who snored peacefully through the tumult of Wagner and the passion of Puccini, in the shadow of the velvet curtains of his wife's box in the Diamond Horseshoe. . . . he who cursed as he lay back in his stall and watched the genius of John Barrymore unfold itself in scarlet and gold before his bored and blasé eyes. . . . he who sat through his wife's receptions in his palace on Fifth Avenue and counted the hours in anguish till he was free to return to his cigar and his drink and his game of bridge. . . . he stood there in that barn of an up-town theatre, clapping his fat hands at the pretty dances, shaking his great body at the silly jokes, drinking in the tinkling, sensuous music with ardent, thirsty ears.

The magic of enchantment was on him. He was a boy again—a happy stripling, long of leg, strong of arm, with the digestion of an ostrich and the physique of a coal-heaver, and passion running riot in his veins for a Florodora girl.

She had been a beauty, that girl of his. Her dark eyes and delicate grace were the pass-words that had opened for him the gates into another world. The other boys had fancied the other five, with their sparkling smiles and their flashing teeth and their robustly beckoning charms. But it was

always the sixth for him. The sight of her slender limbs moving to and fro in the dance had sent him crazy. He recalled with a shiver of joy the fact that he had been able to span her slender instep between his strong forefinger and his big square thumb.

The drums banged and the trumpets blared. In their pink tulle skirts and their rose-laden hats, the Sextette came prancing on.

Instantly, as if a bell had set them ringing, the audience broke out into frantic applause.

Handsome girls, the whole six of them. Short, tall, dark, fair; but the fifth didn't exist for him. He had eyes only for the little one at the end of the row—the Sixth.

She was small and sweet, with a pale face and dark eyes that shone like black stars from under the soft clouds of her raven hair. The grace of her slim silk legs flashing under her pink tulle frock set the blood drumming and thrumming in those old arteries of his that the doctor had said were hardening too fast for safety if he didn't take care.

Hardening? Why, the very lips of him were pulsing with youth and joy. His great hand throbbed with excitement at the sight of that slim young ankle. He swore by all his gods in Wall Street he could span the arch of her instep with his gouty old forefinger and his great square thumb.

As they burst into song he burst into laughter. The people near him turned their heads at the sound of that gurgling joy. They laughed too, out of sheer pleasure to see the fat old boy in the sable coat having such a glorious time.

One little "cutie," indeed, divined such possibilities of a sporty spender lurking behind that huge body and those weary eyes that

she ruffled up her bobbed hair with her hat-pin and gave him the glad eye while she pretended to be looking at herself in the little mirror set into the top of her little bag.

She needn't have troubled herself. He wasn't wasting his time on "cuties" and their tragic little charms. He was looking at the little gold bangle that slipped up and down the soft white arm of Number Six.

Strange how these little coincidences sometimes happen in real life!

He had given HER a gold bangle in those far-away days. Pawned his grandfather's fat old gold watch to buy it, what's more.

He had wanted to give her a little gold ring set with a turquoise, but she had set her heart on a bracelet. "A little gold bangle, Bobsikins, with a little gold pig dangling at the end of a little gold chain for luck."

She had screamed for joy when she had seen it lying in its nest of pink cotton-wool in the little cardboard box. When he had told her that it was eighteen-carat gold and the little pig's eyes were real rubies, her dark eyes had filled with tears. Never, never, NEVER had there been such a Bobsikins before!

In the shadow of the old stage door, under the flickering old gas lamp, she had flung her arms round his neck and kissed him for it. The snow had come whirling down on them in great white flurries. The wind had come tearing up from the river, cutting through and through his thin overcoat like a knife. But he hadn't even known it was snowing. He hadn't felt cold. With the touch of her soft lips on his, she had lighted the flame that knows no quenching. He burned with the eternal fires of desire.

That had been the beginning of it.

That night they had come to an understanding, and the Company had accepted the fact that he and she "belonged."

The other five, passing her on their way out, waiting for him in the little passage, shivering and coughing in the draught, had laughed at her for a fool wasting her time on a great gawk of a boy who had to work like a horse from morning till night to make nine dollars a week. Number One, indeed, who stood at the other end of the row—a fair, fat thing, with dazzling skin and a scarlet mouth, who drove away every night in a smart little brougham and pair, went so far as to say that "sumpin' oughtta be done 'bout it!" She was a disgrace to the glorious Sextette!

Much they cared for the glorious Sextette!

He used to go back with her to supper every night after the show. The grim old landlady with her black wig always askew made no objection to that. She had been let into the great secret. She had been shown the little golden hoop that hung on a blue ribbon round the fair white neck. She knew that they belonged for

keeps—those two. They were to be married as soon as he had made good.

Even then he was ambitious. Hour after hour, night after night, he would sit on the old rag rug at her feet, with his head in her lap and her thin fingers going softly through his black mop of hair, and tell her of all the wonderful things he was going to do.

Get out of Boston; get to New York; get into Wall Street. Work, slave, starve, save. They were to have rooms; a cottage; a house; a mansion. A maid; a butler; a carriage for their very own. She was to have a silk dress; a pearl chain; a diamond star for her hair. . . .

But first and foremost, she was to have a fur coat.

He had set his heart on that, as she had set her heart on the little gold pig. One of those great big sealskin things, down to her heels, up to her ears; the kind that rich Canadian women wear. "No more shiverings and shakings then, my Pretty. No matter how the wind blows or how the snow comes down. You'll be so warm and comfy in your great fur coat, you'll forget you ever had such a thing as a cough or cold."

And she—she would lie curled up at the end of the old red rep sofa, whose back leg wobbled so that you had to prop it upright with an old biscuit tin or else you'd slide off—she'd lie there, her dark eyes shining, her red lips burning, trying to keep her cough back so as not to interrupt him; trying to make herself believe that all these wonders might come true; praying that God would let the show go on just one more week! She would lean down to kiss him and stir the cocoa over his shoulder on the hob to make sure it



The leader of the Sextette . . . snapped her fingers covered with enormous diamond and pearl rings in the excited young man's face.

wouldn't burn. When he'd finished talking, he always wanted "winding up" as he called it.

Even in those days he was fond of his food.

On Sundays, she would pack a basket with apples and sausage rolls, and they would spend the whole day in the Park. She loved the fresh air. It did her cough good, she said. He was all for the City—the great buildings, the flaring lights, the hurrying crowds, the shoving and pushing of the people on their way to Money and Power. But she was all for the country—the great spaces, the unutterable silences, the little wild things that ran and flew about. She taught him the names of all the flowers. She made him listen to the different notes of the singing birds. She opened his eyes to the beauty of the great trees rearing their beautiful heads up into the gay blue sky.

She would throw her arms round their old trunks and press her delicate face against their rough bark and kiss it with something of the same wild passion with which she sometimes kissed him. She said she could feel their life entering into hers. "So strong; so sure; so kind. Like you!" she said. Many a time he had remembered that saying of hers driving through Central Park in his great limousine, sitting by that silent, vinegar-faced wife of his. He had never realised before that trees were alive just the same as men.

Once, on his birthday, he had taken her out to the real country. Sat up half the night for over a week addressing envelopes at two dollars a thousand in order to pay their fares. There had been a funny two-wheeled trap and a fat grey pony; and real woods, and a lake, and funny grey rabbits rushing about. There was a great gold sun like a warming-pan up in the bright blue sky. The snow had flashed like diamonds as it lay inches deep on the ground. The trees had glittered like fairy trees made of silver set in a sea of glass. They had laughed and shouted like children as they ran, hand in hand—crunch, crunch, crunch—up the funny little paths.

In a quiet little dell in a clearing, they had come on a little snowdrop standing all by itself under the shadow of a great oak. When she had seen it she had flung herself down on her knees in the snow and burst out crying. "Oh, Bobsikins! The little thing! So small and white and brave!"

"Like you," he said.

He had wanted to pick it and bring it away, but she wouldn't let him. So they had come away and left it standing, the little white thing, all by itself in the snow.

Somehow, after that, things had been different between them. They hadn't laughed and talked as they generally did—just walked soberly along hand in hand through the woods like people whose hearts were too full for speech. When they came into the open, she stopped and held out her arms. "I'm saying good-bye to the happiest day of my life," she told him. There was a little silver moon up in the dark blue sky, and a great gold star in the flush of the sunset just above their heads. The star of Venus, she called it. The star of Love. She knew everything, even the names of the stars.

When they got back she was so tired he had carried her upstairs like a little child. He waited outside the door and peeped through the crack while she put on her funny little blue dressing-gown and let down her hair.

Such hair! Long past her waist, and such masses! It lay

spread out behind her head on the old rep pillow like a great black cloud.

She lay there and watched him boiling the water and making the tea. There was a pot of quince jelly and a home-made cake from the landlady, who had been called away to spend the night with a sick friend. He had drawn the table up to the sofa, and buttered her toast and cracked her egg. They had played at being married. She had taken the ring off the blue ribbon and put it on her finger. Mr. and Mrs. Bobsikins at home, she called it. Afterwards, when he had cleared away the things, and taken the tray downstairs and brushed up the hearth, he had knelt down and laid his face on the red rep pillow next to hers. She had taken her hair and wrapped it round him, to hide him away from the world, she said.

Sweet hair! When he shut his eyes he could feel it still, so soft and fragrant, lying over his face like a fairy veil.

The little one at the end of the row, Number Six, she had black hair too! . . .

That night he had made up his mind he wouldn't wait any longer to make good. He'd take a chance and marry her at once. It couldn't take much more to keep two than one! He'd go in his lunch hour to the City Hall and get a license, and they would be married that night. He'd have done it too, but next morning, out of the blue, had come his great chance. When he got down to breakfast, there, beside his plate, lay a letter from his cousin in New York.

Business was picking up. He wanted more help. It was the chance of a lifetime for a chap that had got his head screwed on right. "I've had my eye on you ever since you left school," wrote the Wall Street cousin. "Cut out the girls and keep off the drink, and I'll take you in with me as junior partner inside of two years. Is it a go?"

It was a go all right. Even in those days he wasn't one of those who need calling twice when Opportunity knocks at the door. Within an hour he had paid his bill, packed his bag, and was off by the next train.

When he saw her standing there on the platform waving to him and smiling and coughing like mad, the little frail thing, so white, so lonely—he had felt like jumping out of the train and rushing her off to the City Hall at once.

But he hadn't.

He sat tight and went to New York; saw the cousin, got the job; held it down for the two years. Slaved, saved, scraped, starved—sinkers for dinner, porridge for lunch—it's not so easy a job as it sounds to sit tight and go short for two whole years, but he did it. Yes; by Heck! he did it all right, and the dollars in the old tin biscuit-box in the old tin trunk under the bed mounted slowly up and up.

The only luxury he allowed himself during that ghastly time was his weekly letter to HER. Even that he sometimes cut down to a post-card, in order to save the stamp. But he thought of her, longed for her, prayed for her every night of his life. In his lunch hour, when he wasn't running errands to make a few extra cents, he would glue his nose to the great glass windows in the great stores and calculate the price of fur coats.

He often thought he couldn't have carried it through if it hadn't been for her letters to him—gay little letters full of the wonderful things she had seen and questions about him. Never a word of

(Continued overleaf.)



She had taken her hair and wrapped it round him, to hide him away from the world.



I'M called Miss Vain, because
I pass
Such ages, don't you know,
Before my little looking-glass—
Great-Granny's long ago.

Let grown-ups tease ; they'll never
share
My secret game with me,
Or guess that when I linger there
It's not myself I see,

But children of a far-off day—
Such quaint old Jacks and Jills,
Who came with Mums and Gran
to play
In frocks and frills.

With Mum's cat's-cradle I'd be "fed,"
And Granny's battledore ;
Great-Gran was more my style :
she led
Sir Roger down the floor.

IN GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S DAYS.

FROM THE PICTURES BY ANNA WHELAN BETTS.

(Reproduced from "Harper's Magazine" ; Copyright by Harper and Bros.)

herself. But when the show touched at Boston, the grim old landlady would add a line outside the envelope in her illiterate scrawl to say that the travelling seemed to tire her unduly and she still had that nasty cough. . . .

The little girl at the end—Number Six—capering so gaily about in her pink satin shoes—she had a nasty cough too, by Heck! A little tissicky sound that she only let out when the drums banged extra loud, but he heard it all right. She could do with a fur coat, too, no doubt. Those starry eyes of hers would light up like black fires if he walked in one day and gave her a few yards of sable. Why not? Why shouldn't he, if he wanted to? Where was the harm?

She'd look and stare and give him both her hands. . . . Perhaps she'd throw those thin arms of hers round his great neck and give him a kiss with those burning red lips of hers. . . . Why not?

His old heart went thud, thud, thud, at the thought!

"Oh, Florodora, Florodora! Our hearts ring true!
We've come back again to keep faith with you!"

That was the old tune all right. Those were the old words *She* used to sing. . . . Twenty-three years ago, by Heck! Twenty-three years ago! . . .

On the day he was twenty-one the Wall Street cousin called him into the inner office and made him junior partner, just as he'd said. He poured him out a glass of his own special port. "I've no son of my own, but I've a daughter. She's no looker, but she'll have a million dollars when I cash in. I'm looking for a husband that'll turn that million into two. You're the man I've picked for the job. How does it look to you?"

"Gimme a minute," he said.

He'd gone to the window and looked out at New York City, the place of laughter and light.

There was a great gold sun like a warming-pan up in the frosty blue sky. The snow sparkled inches deep on the ground like diamonds. The trees in the little square below glittered like fairy trees made of silver set in a sea of glass. . . . The great river flowed like a golden stream through the golden City. The roar of life had come up to him calling to him of Might, Money, Power. . . .

But all he could see was a frail little girl standing on a platform waving her hand and smiling and coughing like mad. All he could hear was a soft voice murmuring "*Bobsikins*" as he lay hidden away from the world under a veil of cloudy black hair. . . .

"Well," said the cousin, "how about it? Is it a go?"

Then suddenly something had gone snap in his head and he knew what he wanted to do. "No; by Heck, it's *not* a go!" he'd shouted. "I gotta girl of my own that's worth all the money in the world to me! You can give that daughter of yours and her million dollars to some other chap."

He hadn't waited to take the elevator. He had run down all the hundred-and-fifty-odd stairs. He hadn't taken a car. He'd run all the way home. He'd taken the dollars out of the old tin trunk—there were six hundred and twelve of them—packed his bag, and gone. As luck would have it, she was "resting" in Boston that week.

On his way to the station he stopped at the great store and bought a fur coat.

In those two years he'd changed his mind about the sable. It was to be ermine, spotless and white as the little creature itself who died if it couldn't keep itself clean. "White fur for my white snowdrop," he thought. The woman in the store had smiled at his eagerness as she displayed the lining and packed up the coat. "Not another one in the City to match it, Sir. The latest thing in New York. Four hundred dollars, please."

Four hundred dollars! A pretty big slice out of six hundred and twelve. But he didn't care. He'd seized the coat and paid the bill. He sat with the great cumbersome parcel in his arms, hugging it all the way up.

When he got to Boston there was no dainty figure shivering and coughing on the platform. There were no gay little feet running down the stairs to welcome him in. The old landlady, her face stained with crying and her black wig over her ear showing the grey beneath, opened the door to him. He was so happy he gave her a good smacking kiss on both her dirty old cheeks. "Here I am at last!" he'd shouted. He waved the great box in her face. "And here's the fur coat!"

"You're two years too late," the old woman told him. "You and your fur coats! She's waiting for you upstairs in the old room. Go on up and see!"

He remembered he laughed and shouted like a boy let out from school as he raced up the rickety stairs.

In the little sitting-room where they had played at being married, it was very quiet. The sun came through the windows and turned everything to gold..

She lay on the old red rep sofa very white and still. The blue ribbon with the little gold hoop hung round her fair white neck. Her hair lay all spread out behind her on the pillow like a great black cloud.

In her hand there was one little snowdrop. . . .

"I wanted to buy her a wreath," the old landlady burst out sobbing, "but she wouldn't have it. Just one snowdrop," she said. "Only one. If he comes, he'll understand."

He understood all right. She hadn't picked her snowdrop, and he hadn't picked his. . . .

He put the wedding-ring on her wedding finger, and wrapped her fair white body in her ermine coat. He knelt down beside her with his head on the old rep pillow, and her hair shutting him out from the world, and cried himself blind.

They were the last tears he ever shed.

Next day, after the funeral, he went back to New York and married the cousin's daughter. She was ten years older than he was. Her mouth was like a trap, and her eyes as hard as stones. Lord, how he hated her! But she'd nothing to complain of. He hadn't turned her million dollars into two, as he'd promised her father. He'd turned them into ten. . . .

The drums banged. The trumpets blared. The curtain went down. The lights went up. He suddenly felt very old and very weary. He was panting a bit, as if he'd been raging at one of his stenographers. His feet were horribly tired.

He pushed and shoved his way through the crowd thinking about his dinner. What the Devil had possessed him to come to a place like that? The door of Fairyland had been shut

in his face, and he was left standing outside alone in the biting wind and the snow.

The car drew up at the curb. The nigger in his green coat and brass buttons rushed forward to open the door. It was then he caught sight of the ermine coat in the shop window next door.

It was one of those smart little up-town stores, who show one gorgeous garment to attract passing eyes to their cheaper wares.

"Not going," he scowled at the commissionaire.

"Wait," he told the chauffeur.

He went into the little store and bought the ermine coat.

It was very long and very smart—down to your heels, up to your ears; the kind that rich Canadian women wear.

"How much?" said he.

"Four thousand dollars," said the woman, trembling in her boots.

He scrawled his name on a cheque with his gouty old hand, and threw it down on the counter. "Gimme it," he said.

When the woman saw the signature she nearly passed out. Never, to her dying day, would she forgive herself. She might just as easily have asked five thousand dollars as four.

As she packed the beautiful thing, she displayed the lining. "The very latest thing in New York, Sir."

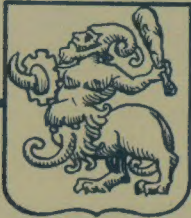
"Aw, Hell!" said he. "Pack the coat and shut your mouth."

When it was all ready in its great cardboard box, he looked

(Continued overleaf.)



He put the wedding-ring on her wedding-finger, and wrapped her fair white body in her ermine coat.



NOTHING TO WRITE HOME ABOUT!

FROM THE PICTURE BY WILL OWEN.



round for someone to take it away. A little lad with fat red cheeks was eating an orange at the back of the store.

"Is he honest," he asked the woman.

"As God," said she.

He took the boy by the ear and gave him his instructions and a five-dollar bill. "At the end of the row, on the right," said he.

Panting and puffing he hoisted himself into his car, gave the expectant nigger a five-cent piece, and rolled away into the night.

In the dirty little waiting-room by the stage door, the smart young man from the box office was talking to the sumptuous young Jewess. She hadn't made good apparently with the great "angel" who had visited them unawares, but her bright eyes and her scarlet mouth had got him going. He was asking her to dine.

"Where?" said she.

He looked at the enormous diamond rings on her dirty fingers, and took a chance of their being paste. "Childs," said he.

"I gotta date," said the sumptuous young Jewess. She didn't approve of Childs.

At that moment Fate, in the guise of a boy with red cheeks, sucking an orange and carrying a cardboard box, intervened.

"What you got there?" demanded the smart young man.

"Fur coat," said the boy.

"Who for?" said the smart young man.

"The dark one that stands at the end of the row on the right of the Sextette," said the boy.

"That's *ME*!" said the sumptuous young Jewess, and her black eyes began to roll.

The boy looked at her doubtfully with his shrewd young gaze. "He said you was short and thin and the picka the bunch," said he.

"I'm the one that stands at the end of the row on the right," said she, and her bosom began to heave.

"Is she?" said the boy to the smart young man.

"She certainly is," replied he.

"Sign here, please," said the boy. Strong in the sense of duty fulfilled, he surrendered the box, and departed in search of ice-cream.

The young man and the young woman stared at each other across the great white parcel.

"My Gawd, Girlie, it's from HIM! You musta got him going after all."

Trembling with excitement, they opened the cardboard box.

When she saw the coat, the sumptuous young Jewess screamed so loud that little Number Six, passing through at the moment on her way out, stopped to ask if she was hurt.

When she saw the coat, her delicate face flushed rosy red. "Oh," she whispered. "It's *ermine*! She put her head down and kissed the beautiful thing softly. She put out her small hand and smoothed it tenderly. It lay like a little snowdrop on the spotless white fur.

Something in the sight of that hand—so white, so fine—upset the sumptuous young Jewess. She snatched the coat away. "No offence, dearie, but I can't abide having my good things pawed about!"

When Number Six had gone, she took off her own fifty-dollar wrap trimmed with cat-skin, and put on the ermine coat.

"You sure do look swell," murmured the smart young man. He slipped his arm round her shapely shoulders and held her tight. "Be a sport, Girlie. Break your date and come on out and dine."

"Where?" said she.

"A swell looker like you? The Ritz of course," said he. He bent down and down till his face touched hers. "I know where there's an ermine toque with a black paradise, second-hand, as good as new?" he whispered. "Say the word, Girlie, and it's yours."

"*Reel* ermine?" asked she.

"*Reel*!" said he.

As they kissed beneath the flickering old gas-lamp in the shadow of the dirty stage-door, he saw, to his amazement, that her black eyes were filled with tears.

In the dining-room of the Ritz Carlton that night, at a small table decorated

with red roses and set a little apart from the rest, and the head waiter hovering near, sat a woman and a man.

The man was tall and fat, with a red face and a bald head and pouches of wrinkled flesh under his weary eyes. The woman was tall and thin, with a mouth like a trap and eyes as hard as stone.

A collar of great diamonds set on black velvet encircled her withered throat like a band of fire. A diamond star blazed and burned in the prim coils of her faded, marcelled hair.

Over the backs of their two chairs, spread out behind them like two great fans, lay two magnificent sable coats.

The woman, erect as a dart, the rouge standing out on her thin cheeks like two spots of flame, sat coldly appraising the other women's clothes. The man, his white shirt front puffed out like the breast of a pouter pigeon, sat slumped over his plate, gobbling the last remaining drops of his mockturtle soup. Suddenly he ceased gobbling, beckoned to the head waiter, and darted a gouty forefinger at his empty plate.

"Gimme some more soup," said he.

"What do we eat to-night?" he grunted across to his wife.

The head waiter removed the plate with his own sacred hands. His wife raised her gold lorgnette on its pearl-studded chain and languidly consulted the menu—

"Mockturtle soup. Salmon with sliced cucumbers and mayonnaise sauce. Roast sirloin of beef; horseradish sauce; Pommes pailles. Roast duck with sage stuffing and green peas. Tomato salad. Iced apricots à la vanille. . . ."

She stopped translating, dropped the card, and turned her glass on the young couple advancing gaily down the room.

The young man was tall and well set up in his smart new clothes. The girl was a sumptuous young Jewess with hennaed hair and lustrous eyes that flashed and flamed under the black paradise drooping over her shapely bust. Every head was turned to look after her as she passed through the labyrinth of tables in her magnificent ermine coat.

A strangely eager look came into the hard eyes of the woman with the diamond star in her hair. She leaned forward whispering to her husband behind her black ostrich-feather fan.

"Look at that creature at the table next ours, John. Did you ever see such a coat? It's ermine! *Real* ermine! I like ermine! I want an ermine coat!"

"Aw, Hell! you and your fur coats!" he grunted. He turned his great head and flashed a quick look at the table next theirs. "Go buy one!" said he.

"He's seen you, Girlie! He's seen you!" whispered the smart young man behind his hand. "You got the old Bird going O.K."

"I should worry," said the sumptuous young Jewess. She laid her soiled hand with a meaning glance on her ermine coat, and her black eyes began to roll.

The hard eyes watching her like a cat watching a mouse fastened themselves on the soiled hand. "What's that creature rolling her eyes at *you* for?" she snapped at her husband, busily gobbling salmon and mayonnaise sauce.

"Aw, Hell! you and your rolling!" he said. "You make me tired!"

Suddenly he smiled.

"He's smiling at *her*," thought his wife, and her heart went cold.

"He's smiling at *ME*!" thought the sumptuous young Jewess, and she had a vision of a porridge-basin full of pearls.

"He's smiling at *you*!" said the smart young man, and he made up his mind to propose to her that very night.

They were all three wrong, unhappily.

He was smiling at the thought of a little white snowdrop of a girl wrapped up in a great white fur coat all comfy and warm.

"She won't cough to-night with *that* on her back!" thought he.

Unfortunately, he had forgotten that left is right on the stage from the front, and right is left.

He smiled again as through an opening door he scented the first appetising whiff of the approaching duck with sage stuffing and trimmings of green peas.

[THE END.]



She stopped translating, dropped the card, and turned her glass on the young couple advancing gaily down the room.



THE GOLDEN AGE.

FROM THE PICTURE BY ETIENNE DRIAN.



NOT IN THE SCOUTS' RULES! TRACKING THE GHOST.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HAROLD C. EARNSHAW.



HIS OWN SANTA CLAUS.

FROM THE PAINTING BY LAWSON WOOD.



WHEN THE STARS ARE LIT.

FROM THE PAINTING BY LOUISE JACOBS.



A "MAX" IDEA THAT MIGHT SUGGEST A NEW CHRISTMAS GAME: A "DOUBLE"—LOUISE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Mr. Max Beerbohm's "Doubles" might well suggest a first-rate game for Christmas. Another example by Max will be found on the facing page. Pictures showing how Doubles can be made are overleaf.

From the Double by Max Beerbohm recently Exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, Leicester Square.



A "DOUBLE" BY MAX: "THE CROATIAN PEASANT GIRL."

As stated under our front-page picture, Mr. Max Beerbohm's ingenious and amusing "Doubles" suggest a new entertainment for the Christmas Season. How "Doubles" of a sort can be made by anyone is shown on our next two pages.

From the Double by Max Beerbohm recently Exhibited at the Leicester Galleries, Leicester Square.

HOW TO IMITATE "MAX": THE MAKING OF "DOUBLES"

PHOTOGRAPHS OF MRS. YVONNE PARK SPECIALLY TAKEN FOR "THE ILLUSTRATED

AS A CHRISTMAS GAME—THE METHOD AND RESULTS.

LONDON NEWS" BY BERTRAM PARK; "DOUBLES" BY MRS. PARK.



THE FIRST DABS OF COLOUR PUT ON THE PAPER.



FOLDING THE PAPER, TO GET THE FIRST "SKELETON."



UNFOLDING THE VEAL THE



PAPER, TO RE-FIRST RESULT.



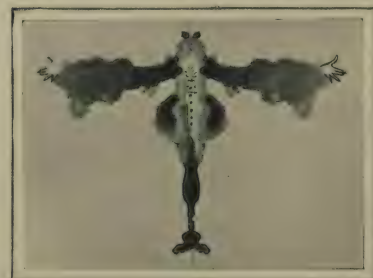
THE "SKELETON" REVEALED AND READY FOR FINISHING.



GIVING THE FINISHING TOUCHES, AFTER THE "DOUBLING."



A "DOUBLE": "A LADY OF THE PERIOD."



ANOTHER "DOUBLE": "VOLTAIRE."



A FIRST-RATE EXAMPLE OF THE ART OF "DOUBLING" À LA "MAX": "THE ABORIGINAL"



A RESULT OF TESTING THE NEW SUPER-FORM OF "SKELETONS": "BRONCHO BILLY."



A CARICATURE "DOUBLE": "AUGUSTUS JOHN."

During Mr. Max Beerbohm's recent exhibition of his works, at the Leicester Galleries, it was revealed that the distinguished artist and writer had invented a super-form of that old game, "Skeletons." He is not content to write a name, and then, folding the paper, get a "skeleton" of the familiar, primitive nature. He takes a brush and lays a dab or two of colour on the paper, which he then folds in half and presses. The first "skeleton"

[SEE PRECEDING PAGES]

thus made, he adds other dabs, using variously coloured paints, folds again, and so on, sometimes "doubling" half-a-dozen times or more. Then, a satisfactory basis having been evolved, he finishes it with a touch or two. The photographs on this page show how the reader may imitate "Max" this Christmastide; and give some examples of "Doubles" not made by Mr. Beerbohm, to whose ingenuity we wish to acknowledge all indebtedness.

The Four Seasons in Tapestry.



SUMMER.



AUTUMN.



SPRING.

The Four Seasons in Tapestry.



WINTER.

The panels on this and the preceding page are late seventeenth-century Flemish work. They were shown at the Franco-British Exhibition of Textiles held in the Victoria and Albert Museum this year. All are after Teniers. The alternative titles are as follows: Summer (The Pasture); Autumn (Hunting); Spring (Fishing); and Winter (Pig-killing). The panels are reproduced by courtesy of the owner, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

In The Old Days



*The Youngsters did the Christmas Romping;
But*



It is the Youngsters who Play Sedately, Scientifically;



*While their Elders were as Sedate as Might be.
Now*



While their Elders — Well !

Christmas has changed with the times, and our modern festivities differ in many ways from those of our forefathers. One remarkable contrast between to-day and yesterday is the fact that, while in former times the children revelled in Christmas romps, while their elders amused themselves sedately over the card-table, the position nowadays is completely reversed on many an occasion. The younger generation takes its Christmas pleasures seriously, poring over books or engrossed

in scientific mechanical toys. The romping nowadays is done by the grown-ups, who indulge in all the joys incidental to the pulling of crackers, the donning of paper caps, and so on. Lovers, and others of an intermediate age, who formerly gravitated towards the youngsters and their games, now leave them to their graver pursuits and join the frolics of the old folks. It is a sign of the times, a tendency to postpone senility, or, at any rate, to enjoy a second childhood.





GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

FROM THE PICTURE BY WALTER APPLETON CLARK. COPYRIGHT BY P. F. COLLIER AND SON.



TWA'S COMPANY.

FROM THE PICTURE BY NOEL FLOWER.



'T WAS EVER THUS! THE OLD JEERS AT THE NEW.

Jehu not only "driveth furiously," but is furiously jealous of innovations in the form of new methods of locomotion. It was ever thus. Just as the taxi, when it first came in, evoked the scorn of the hansom, so the hansom had been derided by the growler, or four-wheeler. Still longer ago, the driver of the old hackney coach jeered at the bearers

of the sedan chair, which, as recorded in Knight's "London" (Vol. I, p. 28), was first introduced here by Charles I. in 1634. Such a scene is shown in our illustration, where a Christmas "fare" of Stuart days has chosen the then novel type of vehicle, and is being borne to his destination amid the gibes of the hackney-coach drivers.

FROM THE PICTURE BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.



"IN WINTER'S GRIP."

FROM THE PAINTING BY J. FARQUHARSON, R.A.

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A RAY OF SUNSHINE.

FROM THE PAINTING BY JULES A. MUENIER.

The TRUTH about SANTA CLAUS

BY

OWEN OLIVER

Illustrated by
JOHN CAMPBELL

PEOPLE ought to be careful what they say. Of course, a chap doesn't take in all they tell him, but he has to believe some of it. Tommy and I thought it was true what cook said about Santa Claus.

It was when Tommy asked her if Santa Claus didn't get tired carrying round all the presents; and where he put his bag while he was dropping them down the chimneys, so that it didn't slide off the roof.

"Ah!" cook said. "You're a boy with a thinking mind, you are, Master Tommy."

"I can think better than he can," I told her. "He's only seven and I'm eight."

"That's why I am surprised at his thinking of it," she 'splained. "If it had been you, Master Jim, I shouldn't have wondered. You're growing big enough to understand things, you are. Ah-h! I could tell you some secrets about Santa Claus, if I chose to open my mouth!"

"You mean that he's father?" I asked.

"We fort he was!" Tommy yelled. He always butts into everything.

Cook put up her hands as if she was shocked—just like Aunt Annie did when she lifted the tea-cosy and my white mouse jumped out. (We only wanted to see if they suffocated under things, like teacher said. Now we don't believe her any more.)

"Your father!" cook cried. "Now don't start that nonsense again! Didn't you prove last year that Santa Claus was a spirit? You put down a whole box of tin-tacks for him to walk on, and in the morning the presents were there all the same, and you hadn't heard a sound. It stands to reason that no one but a spirit could walk on tin-tacks and not holler—now, doesn't it?"

"Yes," I agreed. "But they was—I mean, were—all gone in the morning."

"Of course!" she said. "Didn't I promise you I'd brush them up, so that nobody shouldn't see them afterwards?"

"I thought perhaps you brushed them up too soon," I told her.

"Not a moment too soon," she declared.

"Tell us some of the secrets," I asked her.

"Well," she said, "if you must know, he doesn't put the presents down the chimneys at all. If he did, they'd be all sooty; and I'll wager you've never seen soot on a single one. A boy of your age ought to have noticed that."

"Of course I have," I declared. "It's only Tommy that hasn't."

"Yes, I have," Tommy shouted. "I noticed ever so many times that there wasn't any soot on them. What's soot, cook?"

"Black stuff in the chimney," she 'splained. "What sweeps take away; and it's used to keep slugs from cabbages. Santa Claus has too much sense to drop toys through that muck. And, besides, he might fall off the roof. My cousin's wife

had a friend whose husband did. And he couldn't stand his bag down, as Master Tommy says. He doesn't go messing about on the roof, not him! He just flies in through the window."

"Which window?" Tommy asked.

"Most likely the kitchen window," said she.

"How can he?" I said. "It's always shut at night."

"Makes no difference to him, because he's a spirit. Surely you know about them? A boy of your age ought to."

"Of course I do," I told her. "A spirit is—well, he's like coloured water when he's in a bottle, and like air when he's out."

"And gets through the window like the cold air does," cook 'splained. "You go and hold your hand there, and you'll feel it."

"That's the draught," I told her.

"Well, it's the same thing."

"The presents aren't spirits," I 'minded her. "They can't go through windows without breaking them."

"Oh!" she said. "Of course, when he's inside he opens the window and lifts his bag in. But he's not going to lug a great big bag upstairs, mind that."

"On'y our presents," Tommy rubbed his hands like he does. (Little idiot!)

"Exactly. He'll put his bag on this table and pick out your presents and carry them upstairs. He leaves the bag on it till he comes down again. My! I wish I was here. I'd have a few things out of that bag."

"You sit up, cook," Tommy proposed, "and get some things for us. Pe'haps he wouldn't notice two or four."

"Two or three, you mean."

"No, he doesn't," I contradicted. "Two each is four. Teacher says so."

"Does she? Well, a lot of people say so. . . . I shouldn't stop at two or three or four. May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. I'd have the lot while I was about it."

"Then you'd be a fief," Tommy told her, "an' go to prison!"

"Not me! You can't steal from spirits. They haven't got any property."

"They take a lot of people to court, on account of spirits, cook," Annie said. She's the parlour-maid, but she was helping cook then. She's awful fond of teasing, and you never know if she's making fun.

"And it seems that a lot of people take you to court," cook said, "Miss Pert or Miss Flirt! I saw you with the milkman."

"There was mistletoe," I 'splained, "and he was trying if it was all right, he said."

"And was it?" cook wanted to know.

"Awful strong!" I said. "It made him kiss Annie two times, but it wouldn't make me kiss anybody."

"That's a pity," cook thought, "because if it did—you see, a cook has to give a mince pie to any



"Tell us some of the secrets."

gentleman who kisses her under the mistletoe on Christmas Eve."

"I b'lieve it would make *me*!" Tommy told her. "Let's go and look, cook!"

So they went.

"What does a parlourmaid have to give, Annie?" I asked, "if she's mistletoed?"



"What does a parlourmaid have to give, Annie?" I asked, "if she's mistletoed?"

"Jam tart!" she said.

"Come along!" I told her. She did.

So I got the best of Tommy, because I like jam tarts more than mince pies; and Annie is good-looking; gooder than cook.

We wanted more, but they said they only had to give one pie or tart, and wouldn't come out again. We thought that Mary (she's the scullery maid) didn't look clean enough for mistletoeing. So we went upstairs to try Maud. She's our sister, and fifteen, and it doesn't matter if you kiss sisters. She said she'd give us three chocolates each if we brought some mistletoe to her and kissed her; but she wasn't going to get off the sofa (she was reading a soppy book). She kept the mistletoe and gave us two chocolates extra. I bet she only wanted the mistletoe because cousin Frank was coming.

"I say, Tommy," I suggested, when we had gone upstairs and eaten the chocolates, "if we got that bag—whew! There might be hundreds of things in it!"

"More!" he said. "Six—seven things."

He's rotten at arithmetic. So I made him hold up his fingers ten times to show him what a hundred was. He called it ten hands.

"Well," he told me, "we can't get it, can we?"

"Why not?" I said. "We've got to keep awake, of course. We can have watches and do it in turns, like the sailors. Then we'll hear him open the window to lift the bag in. Then he'll put it on the table to get our presents out."

"How many?" Tommy asked. He's a young ass.

"How do I know? Nobody ever does, till they come. When he's got them out, he'll bring them upstairs and leave the bag on the table. Which way would you expect he'll come? Front stairs or kitchen stairs?"

"He's company," Tommy thought, "isn't he?"

"Ye-es," I agreed. "He ought to be. He doesn't come to work. But he ought to come in the dining-room window."

"Or the dooring-room," Tommy said.

"Silly! There's no empty big table to put his bag on! . . . Cook said he'd come to the kitchen, anyhow. . . . Well, we'll listen; and if he comes up the kitchen stairs we'll go down the others. If he goes out of the kitchen along the passage, we'll know he's coming the hall way. Then we'll go down straight into the kitchen; and get the bag before he comes back."

Tommy capered and rubbed his hands like a little donkey.

"Six—seven—ten," he said. "Ten hands of presents! All for you and me. Won't he be 'prised!" He meant surprised. "I say! Jim! S'pose he comes to look for them! And finds we've got them? And tells father!"

Tommy really does think of things sometimes.

"Or takes our own presents away," I said. "That's what he'd do, if he knew we had the bag. Of course, he'd see that, too."

"Let's put it in bed," Tommy proposed.

"Make a great bump," I told him. "He'd see it directly."

"Could he light the gas?"

"You stupid! Spirits can see in the dark."

"Are they cats?" he wanted to know.

"Ass!" I cried. "They're—oh! Just spirits. They're awful artful."

"Well . . . we could take our own p'sents into bed, and hold them tight, if he tried to take them."

"Then he'd take us too, very likely," I warned him. "Spirits are very strong, Annie says. I tell you! We'll hide the bag in the drying cupboard on the stairs. Then he won't think we took it, if he finds it. I expect he won't go there to look. Spirits won't stand too much water, cook says; and there's ever so much in the cistern!"

"Hundreds!" Tommy laughed.

"You don't count water," I told him.

"Specks spirits do!" Tommy thought. He has funny notions. "Well—s'pose he *does* come upstairs again. I don't want him to. Pe'haps he'd touch us. Spirits burns you. Annie says so!"

"Annie tells fibs," I 'minded him. "She's always pulling your leg. She knows you're a silly kid and believe everything."

"No, I don't," he contradicted. "Not what *you* say."

I socked him for his cheek, and he hit me on the nose, and we had a fight; till Maud ran upstairs and stopped us. She sat me down so hard that I couldn't think for a minute, and made us say "pax," and shake hands. She's as strong as an elephant, and taller than mother.

"Specks Santa Claus is stronger than Maud," Tommy thought, when she had gone. "If he comes up to us—my word!"

"I know," I told him. "We'll ring the bell on the landing. It sounds in the kitchen. They all do! Then he'll think father is getting up; and run off. And we'll rush into our room and shut the door and lock it."

"Can spirits get through doors?" Tommy wanted to know.

"Fool!" I cried. "If they could, would they trouble to come through windows like they do? Only windows on the ground. He can't get in our window. That's why he goes to the kitchen. See!"

"I see." Tommy rubbed and rubbed his hands; and kept opening and shutting them to count a hundred. "It might be a magic bag," he thought, "and presents keep coming in it. Whew! Fancy if we had Santa Clauses every day."

When we went to bed we arranged just what we would do. We were rather tired, because Cousin Frank had taken us and Maud to the pictures in the evening. She said we were "chaperones." I didn't know what that was, but Frank 'splained that it meant people who never took their eyes from the pictures. We didn't, of course. They were fine; 'specially Episode XVII. of



I socked him for his cheek, and he hit me on the nose.

"The Trail of Gore!" The girl was hanging over a precipice by a string when it began, and a rat was gnawing it; but the hero and his friend caught her in a net when she fell, and they escaped on a raft, and made a sail with their coat, and the gang couldn't go after them in their boat, because Black Sambo—he was a good black man—had made a hole in it. The raft came to pieces just before the end, and they are holding to bits of wood, and swimming

[Continued on page 34.]



Tea-time is Hovis Time

HAPPY young faces signal keen delight when Hovis appears on the table! Mother knows, too, that

HōVIS

(Trade Mark)

is best for healthy growing frames. It nourishes brain and body and builds vigorous health.

Hovis is the best food-value for money obtainable, for it is a complete food in itself.

YOUR BAKER BAKES IT.



AN UNAPPRECIATED CAROL.

FROM THE PAINTING BY LAWSON WOOD.

Continued from page 31.

with sharks after them till next week; and Frank is going to take us (and Maud). We do not 'speck the shark will catch the girl or the hero; but we think he might catch the friend and get a leg. We want to see how sharks do it, but we don't want the friend killed.

Tommy had the first watch, because I was so sleepy; and the little fool fell asleep. (If he was a soldier he would be shot for it, and I told him so.) But I had a dream, and it woke me. I thought I was in the cold water, and the shark had caught me; but it was only Tommy. He'd pulled the clothes off, and was digging his toe-nails into my leg.

I shook him and woke him up, and I was going to have a court-martial on him, for sleeping on his post, and meant the sentence to be ten lashes with the towel. At least, it was to be "death," but I was going to play I was the general, and reduce it, because it was Christmastime and he was young. I thought I heard someone moving downstairs, just as the court-martial was going to begin.

"You fool!" I whispered. "You've slept and let him come without telling me! Listen!"

We crept to the door and listened. He was keeping pretty quiet, but we were sure that he was there. We heard several little bumps and noises, as if he was knocking tin things together. We 'spected they might be clockwork trains or engines. We went a little way down both stairs, and made sure that he was in the dining-room.

"He's mistaken it for a bedroom," I whispered. "He doesn't know the house, of course. When he finds that we don't sleep down there, he'll come upstairs. Now's the time to get the bag!"

We crept down the servants' stairs to the kitchen. It's a glass door at the bottom that lets light in, but you can't see through it properly. There was a tiny gas in the room. We opened the door very softly, and I peeped round it; and Santa Claus wasn't there; but his bag was. It was on the table just as cook told us he would put it;

and it seemed to be nearly full. It was not clean and white like they put it in the pictures, but nearly black and awful dirty, and made marks all over our pyjamas.

"Tommy!" I whispered. "It's here! The bag! Quick! . . . Don't be an ass and make a noise. Catch hold. . . . Whew! It's a lump. . . . You lift that end and I'll lift the other. Don't make a noise whatever you do. Now then, hold it up."

We got it off the table. It was so heavy that we nearly let it fall; but we staggered along with it and got it on the stairs. Then I shut the door quietly, and we rested a bit. Then we pulled it up to the middle landing. The hot linen closet is there, and we pushed and pushed till we got it inside and shut the door. Then I heard Santa Claus going back to the kitchen.

"Run upstairs, Tommy," I told him, "and get your finger on the bell ready to push when I whisper 'Ring.' I'll watch at the

top of the stairs and listen if he says anything about his bag. Perhaps he'll forget it."

Tommy ran to the bell-push. He was quick for once. I watched the glass door. (They call it ground glass.) There was a shadow of Santa Claus on it, but he was not very plain. I could not make out his long hair or beard, and he seemed to wear a round hat; but his arms were full of things. I could see that.

All of a sudden he gave a jump—and I knew he'd missed his bag. He said something right out loud. "Well, I'm ——" I wasn't sure what the last word was. It sounded like "danned." I 'spected it means surprised. I think Santa Claus is a nice man, but I do not think he has a very nice way of speaking. But I suppose spirits have a growley language, like wild Indians.

"Ring, Tommy!"

I whispered; because Santa Claus sounded rather savage, and I wanted him to go.

Tommy rang so quickly and so loud that it made me jump; and I saw Santa Claus's shadow drop all the things out of his arms and fly. I think he knocked over a chair and the clothes-horse. Anyhow, there was an awful noise of things falling. I can never make out why it didn't wake anybody, but it didn't; and Tommy and I rushed into our bedroom and locked the door.

"He's going out the window," I told Tommy. "Let's look through our blind."

Our room is on the kitchen side.

We peeped through the blind, and we saw Santa Claus running down the kitchen garden, and right across the celery bed. He climbed over the wall at the end, and then we saw him running over the field. He ran as long as we could see him. I think spirits are not used to electric bells, and we must have frightened him a lot.

"Jim!" Tommy grabbed my arm all of a sudden. "S'pose he wasn't Santa Claus after all; on'y a burglar!"

I really was frightened when Tommy said that; but I rushed to

our stockings and found that they were full; and things underneath, too. An awful big lot. So we knew he was Santa Claus.

"They feel *all right*," Tommy said, and I could hear him rubbing his hands in the dark. "Jim! It felt like a 'normous train in the bag. Six—seven—both hands! Engines and carriages. Hope it's steam clockwork and lots of rails!"

"Steam's no good," I told him. "Mother will say it isn't safe; as if we were kids of five or six!—and father will want to work it for us! I hope it's clockwork. They'll let us clock it ourselves. Only don't you mess about with the inside and burst it up. You let me show you how to do it. Remember, I'm eight."

"I'm tired," Tommy said. He gaped like anything.

I was tired too. So we went to bed for a few minutes before we fetched the bag; but our luck was out, and we

[Continued on page 42.]



I watched the glass door. . . . There was a shadow of Santa Claus on it, but he was not very plain.



Patball and the Princess: A Story for Children.

"I WANT my breakfast," cried King Rotundus crossly—"come!" "There is yet one more paper to sign, your Majesty," said Patball, the Prime Minister and Hereditary Train-bearer. "To-day is the annual renewal of the old Act forbidding any white-haired person to enter the Palace on pain of death." "I signed it long ago, Patball," said the King uneasily. "Nay, your Majesty," Patball insisted, producing the paper. The King signed with a bad grace, and rose from his roll-top desk.

"What merry stave will Fanfaron the Herald play?" asked the obsequious Patball. "The Dead March," snapped the King, and the procession started, Patball bearing the royal train. At every third step the King kicked poor Fanfaron. "Plainly, Majesty is out of sorts," thought Patball. "I'm glad my place is not in front."

In the breakfast parlour the Queen Gracilissa stood waiting for the King. Court etiquette ordained that her mantle and her robe should be spread like a bell tent across the room, the base of the tent measuring exactly eleven times the King's right foot. Before he said, "Good-morning, my dear," Rotundus paced out the distance, and finding it half an inch short, he snatched up the *Times*, which was resting against the coffee-pot, rolled the paper into a baton, and whacked the Queen's train-bearers soundly. The boys fled howling, and their Majesties went solemnly to table. "We shall wait upon Ourselves, Patball," said the King, and the Minister, concealing his disappointment, bowed and withdrew. He had hoped that their Majesties' table-talk would enlighten him as to the King's ill-humour, and he longed to listen at the keyhole, but dared not because of the Guard in the corridor. Moodily Patball went to his own apartment where, having ordered coffee, rolls, and a hard-boiled egg, he sat down to think. Afar off, he heard Fanfaron still playing sad music.

"Stop that abominable row, Fanfaron," said the King at last, "and get out. Stay, here is a poached egg for you. It is not good, but that is a detail. You have only to believe that it is fresh, and you will enjoy it all right. Now, hop it."

Fanfaron retired backwards. The King went to the sideboard and

brought the Queen some butterflies' roes on toast. "No, my dear," he remarked; "only coffee for me. I have no appetite." "Nor have I," said her Majesty. "Can you wonder?" "I do not wonder," rejoined Rotundus. "It is enough to kill devoted parents. Well, how is she this morning?" "Our beloved daughter, the Princess Jazzetta," sighed the Queen, "is much about the same, thank you." The King groaned. "Does the Court suspect anything?" he asked anxiously.

"Providentially, no. I have given it out that Jazzetta has a slight cold. None has seen her save myself and her fan-boy Peter, who is dumb." "'Tis well," said the King. "Nay, 'tis not well, but 'twill serve for a tale, although only for a day or two. Is there no change?"

"None. Darling Jazzetta's hair is still as black as ink, and bobbed at that—all in one night, too, as her Fairy Godmother (the Ugly One) foretold, but we laughed at that for an old wife's tale. It is our punishment for being so Modern in our ideas. Have you told Patball?"

"Not yet. But if I know the man, he will nose our secret. Jazzetta's extremity is his opportunity. I esteem Patball, but do not see him as our son-in-law; yet marriage with the 'P. M.' as that horrid Fairy said, is the only way but one, and that hopeless, to restore our daughter's lovely and luxuriant hair."

Together the King and Queen wept into their cups. "Of course, you wired," the King sobbed, "for Dr. Philaster?"

"He comes at ten. He has hurried from Bessarabia post haste by Handley-Page. I must go to receive him."

Outside the door of Jazzetta's room, the Queen was disputing with Dr. Philaster, Physician, Magician, and Astrologer-in-Emergency to all the Courts of the Five Continents. Her Majesty's brow was sad, but her speech was not low.

"I can understand, Doctor, that you should insist on my staying out, but *must* you take that boy in with you?"





"It is my invariable professional custom, Ma'am. What is a doctor without his Boy? And Gregory is a discreet lad."

"I am sure I hope so. But if Gregory stayed here, the Princess's little dumb fan-boy, Peter, could come out and play pitch-and-toss with him while you see your patient. It would be nice for both of them."

"No doubt; but quite out of the question, Ma'am. Either I take Gregory or I take my departure," said Dr. Philaster, respectfully but firmly. "Pray retire to your own apartments, and return in ten minutes." And in he went with his chubby boy at his heels.

"Not a word, your Royal Highness," cried Dr. Philaster, as Jazzetta rose eagerly from her pillow to welcome the physician. "I understand your case. Drink this, all but five drops," he said, holding out a stumpy phial. Gregory grinned, for he knew well what the bottle held. Jazzetta smiled to him, and resolved to give him some of her chocolates when she had taken her medicine. She thought him such a nice little scrubbed boy. She drank her physic, all but five drops. "Now, Gregory, me lad," said Dr. Philaster, "take the bottle and finish off the good work."

Gregory did as he was bid. The Princess stared. "Oh, what a lovely lad!" exclaimed Jazzetta, and fell fast asleep. . . .

Punctually at the end of ten minutes, the Queen met the Physician outside her daughter's door. "The Princess will do well," said Dr. Philaster, smiling. "She sleeps. Do not waken her on any account. No; five guineas, not three. Thank you very much."

"But," said Gracilissa anxiously, "where is that awful boy, Gregory?"

"I sent him away five minutes ago to see to our 'bus. Your Majesty will excuse me. I have many other calls to make." And Dr. Philaster vanished.

Meanwhile Patball had been studying some secret State records the King had always forbidden him to touch. "Good," said the Prime Minister, with a sly smile. "Good. It is fortunate I also studied Magic in my youth. All knowledge comes in handy one day." He glanced again at the records, and read aloud: "But if a young Prince with snow-white hair shall kiss the Princess first, her lovely and luxuriant locks will return to her, and the Prime Minister will miss the 'bus." No white-haired young Prince dare come here. I am safe enough. Still, no harm in improving my looks, which are a trifle dry and official at the best. Jazzetta will like me all the better if I knock off a score of years or so. Hey, Presto! Abracadabra! Orthrophotosycophantodicotalaiopos!" He nodded at his reflection in the glass. "Not bad!" he chuckled. "Patball, my boy, thou art translated! Buzz off, now, and get busy. Best interview Papa at once."

But as he hurried to the King's counting-house (for it was the hour when Rotundus attended to money matters), the "P. M." had the shock of his life. For chancing to peep into the Queen's parlour, he saw her Majesty embracing the handsomest imaginable young man, whose hair was snow-white! "Oh, Prince Gregorio," her Majesty was saying; "however did you get past the Guard? But, no matter; you have come just in the nick of time."

"We shall see about that," muttered Patball, and hastened on unobserved. "Prince Gregorio, forsooth! Impostor! There's no such person! Name's Harris,

more likely." On second thoughts he did not go to the counting-house, but raced upstairs to the Princess's apartment. "And may the best man win," he cried, but not in any true sporting spirit.

Bump! He had run into the King's Majesty.

"Hullo, young fellow-me-lad," roared the Monarch, "who the dickens are you, and what make you here?"

"Your Majesty's very humble and obedient Prime Minister, Patball, K.C.B., C.V.O., G.C.M.G., O.M., P.Q., X.Y.R., etc., etc., come to deliver H.R.H. Jazzetta from enchantment, and claim her hand."

"Lunatic! Guard, what ho, without there, or within here! Arrest this impudent varlet! Too thin, my brisk young friend. Why, Patball's fifty, if he's a day—Whew-w—" the royal voice trailed off, for Patball had melted into thin air.

"Don't make such a noise, Roty," commanded the Queen, hurrying along the corridor. "You'll wake dear Jazzy, and Dr. Philaster said—"

"A fig for Dr. Philaster! The Jazzlette's not in her room; the murder'll be out. It is out. Some fool who says he's Patball has just asked me for her hand—but he gave us the slip. After him, Guard—No, arrest Patball, the real one instead. We mustn't let him get a look in. Oh, for the Prince with snow-white hair! Why did I sign that Act!"

"Keep cool, dear Man, keep cool. Provoking of Jazz, however, to vanish like this. Oh, there's Peter!" The Queen spoke on her fingers to the dumb boy, who pointed to the garden—





PATBALL CHANGED SLOWLY INTO AN ILL-FAVOURER DWARF.

The scene of the end of "Patball and the Princess" is the Glade of the Warbling Jackadoos in the Palace Garden. The original Græco-Italo-Phœnician MS. from which the story is taken does not give the name of the country to which Princess Jazzetta belonged, but it must have been the famous dual Monarchy of Phlyaria-Choreia, where alone the Warbling Jackadoo occurred. The bird is now extinct. The period is uncertain, but a Prince Gregorio is known to have studied medicine and cosmetics (specialising in hair dyes and washes) at Padua, soon after the founding of that great School. This would put the year a little later than 1221, but the whole question is obscure. On external evidence, some authorities say that no such monarch as Rotundus ever existed, and personally, I agree; but what does reality matter in a fairy story?—EDITOR, "I.L.N."

"I'll run and send Gregorio there after her," cried the Queen, rushing off.
 "And now we shan't be long."

"Hope not," grumbled the King. "Uneasy lies the head. True for you, William, old Bard. Guard, 'shun! Ahem, what's next? Oh, carry on, Sergeant-Major. By jove! There's that lunatic again, sprinting for the garden. After him! Gone away! Tally ho!"

Patball, for his own ends, had resumed visibility, but White Locks had the start of him. The Prime Minister reached the Glade of the Warbling Jackadoos only in time to see Jazzetta sink into the arms of Gregorio. As he kissed her, her lovely and luxuriant locks floated about her head again, and the Prince's own white hair changed to a glowing auburn.

Patball, the spurious young dandy, sank to the ground with an angry snarl, and changed slowly to an ill-formed dwarf, a sad caricature of the former proud Minister. His magic had recoiled upon itself.

"And sarve you right, Patball, pryin' into State Papers you had no business with," said Rotundus, trotting up breathless. "Bless you, my children! Kiss me, Hardy—I mean Jazzy. Your hand, my boy, Cheerio! You've won her all right. Patball, I know some Magic, too. Yet I'll be merciful. Never more be Minister of mine, but in future you'll relieve Fanfaron. Take his shape and his uniform, with due modifications, and sit on that cold heap of stones, thinking of your sins, till supper-time. Lead on, children. Come, Gracilissa."

"Oh, my Queen," said his Majesty, as they returned arm-in-arm to the Palace, "all's well, etc.; but that Dr. Philaster of yours was rather dud, methinks, and anyway, who is this Prince Gregorio?"

"Not so dud, dear my lord," replied the Queen, laughing gently; "Dr. Philaster is big medicine; for, bless your simple royal heart, Prince Gregorio was the Doctor's Boy!"

L. N.



Where Nature Wears a Christmas Aspect: The Great White North.

DRAWINGS BY ARTHUR HEMING.



CAUGHT RED-HANDED: TWO INDIANS RIFLING ANOTHER'S TRAP SUDDENLY SEE HIM
MIRRORED IN THE WATER WITH UPRAISED GUN, ABOUT TO SHOOT



"IN THE NORTH WOODS ONLY THE PROFESSIONAL HUNTER CARRIES
A GUN": ON SNOW-SHOES WITH A HEAVY "BAG."



"TURN YOUR HEAD AWAY, MY BROTHER"—THE REPORT CUT SHORT
HIS SENTENCE, AND THE BEAR, LEAPING FORWARD, DISAPPEARED."

Mr. Heming's drawings illustrate a fascinating account of travel and sport in the Canadian Northlands, based on thirty-three years' experience, which he recently published. Another of his drawings appears on the next page, with some quotations relating to it and those above.



A NOBLE CREATURE WHOSE HEAD NO WOMAN MAY EAT: A BULL MOOSE.

MR. ARTHUR HEMING alludes, in the article mentioned on the previous page, to a curious belief among the Indians of the Canadian North: "Out of respect to the dignified spirit of the bull moose, women were never allowed to eat of the head, nor was a moose head to be placed upon a sled upon which a woman had ever sat, for then bad luck would follow the hunter to the end of his days." The following extracts bear on his other three drawings reproduced overleaf. "I never carry a gun. So far as protection is concerned, there is no more need to carry a gun in the north woods than to carry

one down Broadway." With professional hunters, of course, it is different. Another picture shows Mr. Heming's Indian guide, Oo-koo-hoo, shooting a black bear. "Crossing a rocky patch on the hillside, the bear came into view. Emerging into sunlight, it turned its head as though it had heard a sound in the rear. It was Oo-koo-hoo speaking. 'Turn away your head, my brother. . . .' but the report of the gun cut short his sentence, and the bear, leaping forward, disappeared among the growth below. Reloading, the hunter followed cautiously. . . . Finally he turned and exclaimed: 'It's dead.'"

My chief mate



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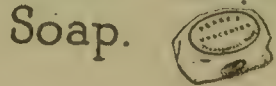
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didn't wake till it was seven, and Cook and Annie and Sarah went downstairs. At least, it was their coming up again that woke us. They were screaming and shouting, and they ran and hammered at father's and mother's door.

"The burglars, Sir!"

"Kitchen window's open, Ma'am!"

"Took all the plate, Sir!"

"Left the dining-room clock and a lot of things in the kitchen, Ma'am!"

"And the gas on!"

"And everything turned upside down, and you never saw such a mess!"

Father and mother rushed down in their dressing-gowns; and Tommy and I ran down after them. Mother screamed and pointed at us.

"Boys!" she cried. "Boys! What have you been doing?"

You see, we had black dabs all over us.

"Oh!" I said. "That! It's all right, Mum. It's only dirt off the bag."

"Bag?" father snapped. He seemed a bit ratty. "What the—the— What do you mean, Sir?"

"Santa Claus's bag, father," I explained. "He left it while he went upstairs with our presents—"

"On the kitchen table," Tommy told him. "An', of course—"

He laughed out loud, like a baby, and rubbed and rubbed his hands.

"We just sneaked it," I said. "Tisn't stealing to take from spirits—cook said so."

"Spirits!" father shouted. "Spirits! What the—the—"

"John!" Mother stopped him.

"I wasn't going to say it," father told her, "not before them. I'll have to go somewhere by myself for a minute. I—"

"Be calm, dear," mother begged. "Oh, you wicked boys! You'll have spoilt the sheets, and—"

"Hang the sheets!" father cried. "Just tell me this, Sir, what have you done?"

"Nothing else," I said. "Only put the bag in the hot linen cupboard, and we rang the kitchen bell, and Santa Claus was frightened and ran away. He went right on your celery bed, and climbed over the wall."

"We saw him froo the blind," Tommy told them. "Ooh! he did run. The bag was awful

and forks and spoons, and ornaments from the drawing-room. They weren't Santa Claus at all. Mother called them 'the plate,' but there wasn't one, so she was wrong!

Tommy howled and howled like anything; and I wished that I hadn't grown too old to cry!

"Santa Claus is an old beast!" I said. "He came back and changed them. I—I—I'm not crying, only I—I—c-can't b-bear to see Tommy so miser'ble! . . . I'm miser'ble too!"

"Never mind, darlings," mother said. She's always jolly decent when you get in trouble; and father isn't bad, either. "I expect father might change something into an extra Christmas present for you, under the circumstances."

She looked at father and stroked his shoulder. She knew how to get over him.

"I think I might," he promised. "Yes, yes. Buck up, old sons. Big boys don't cry, you know."

"I wasn't," I said. "It was only water in my eyes. . . . If we had a motor-tricycle between us?"

"Motor-trykel?" Tommy said, and laughed, and mother mopped his face. He'd blubbered all over it.

"Perhaps you shall," father promised. "Yes, you shall—I'll be the Santa Claus for that. In fact, it seems that Santa Claus has gone to

the bad. I shan't trust him in the house in future. I'll give you your Christmas presents instead."

That will be all right, because we can go with father to choose them; and when you get him in the shop you can persuade him to buy more than he's promised; but I think it is an awful pity that Santa Claus has grown such a wicked man and steals other people's things; and I don't care if cook and Annie both say he's a spirit. I call him a burglar, and so does cook's young man; and he's sure to know, because he's a policeman. I mean to be one when I grow up—unless I'm an engine-driver, or a soldier, or a king.

[THE END.]



"Bag?" father snapped. He seemed a bit ratty. "What the—the— What do you mean, Sir?"

heavy. We fort it was engines and trains, and— It's in the hot cupboard, and—"

"John!" mother cried. "John! The burglar's bag!"

Father bounced up the kitchen stairs, and bumped down again with the bag, and put it on the kitchen table and opened it. . . .

There was nothing in it but a lot of rotten things like the silver tea-pot and coffee-pot,

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(Illustrated London News, Xmas No., 1921.)

NOTE TO READER.

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THE WOMAN FOR THE PART BY HOLLOWAY HORN.



ILLUSTRATED BY
STEVEN SPURRIER.

THE table between the two men spoke of an excellent supper come to its appointed end. Success, always a more subtle intoxicant than alcohol, had left its mark on them; but both had found life good.

"It's a winner, laddie," Murray said, "a gilt-edged winner." His face still had the fresh look which recently removed grease paint leaves. "It seemed to go fairly well," the other agreed.

"Go! It flew. Two hundred nights, if I'm a judge of a first show."

"I'm afraid you speak with the exuberance of the profession," John Playfair replied with a smile.

"I should hate to take things as beastly coolly as you do, anyway," the actor complained. Playfair returned no answer for a moment. His hair was tinged with grey, and there was that in his mobile face which made women, and even men, remember it.

"I didn't always, my dear Murray," he said. "But your stuff has never been turned down."

"You don't remember a play of mine which Russell produced at the old Pallada? 'The Woman Over the Way,' it was called."

"'Fraid I don't."

"No, I don't suppose you would. It's years ago now, and it failed because my 'prentice hand had made a part that no woman could reasonably be expected to play. Among other amazing things she had to do was to break into a man's room and recover certain papers. The actress we got did her best, but she fairly rolled the whole thing in the mud. Anyway, it deserved to fail."

Playfair noticed the actor smile.

"Yes," he admitted; "I know we always blame the actor when things go wrong, but in the case of which I speak it wasn't all my fault; but, bad as the play was, one of the most interesting situations I have ever been in arose from it. Care to hear the yarn?"

The actor nodded.

"Well, it fell out like this," Playfair went on. "The wretched play had been running about a week, and it seemed fairly certain that it wouldn't last a second one. The critics had simply torn it up, and for once in a way they were right; but you can quite understand that I was horribly disappointed. On the night I'm going to tell you about I got back to my rooms with a complete fit of the blues. In those days

I had a tiny flat just off the Haymarket, and my only servant was a woman who did for me generally, but who was never there after six or so in the evening. I don't think I've ever been more lonely than on that night as I let myself into my empty flat; but the moment I crossed the threshold my mood left me. I knew in a flash I wasn't alone. I heard no sound, but I had an uncanny feeling that someone was near me. You know, perhaps, how one can sense another's presence in a dark room? Well, that was it. I wasn't frightened—I think because of the hopeless mood I had been in; and although I was certain someone, or something, was in the hall, I crossed to my study and switched on the light as if I had noticed nothing.

"The room was empty, but one glance sufficed to show me that something was very wrong. My desk, in the window opposite, had been forced open, but what rivetted my attention was a pale biscuit-coloured cloak which had been thrown over a chair by the side of the desk.

"I crossed the room and picked up the cloak. It was faintly scented and soft, and I was standing with it in my hand when I heard a voice behind me. Swinging round, I found

[Continued overleaf.]

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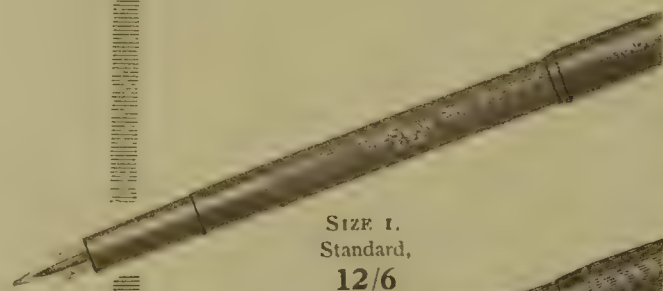
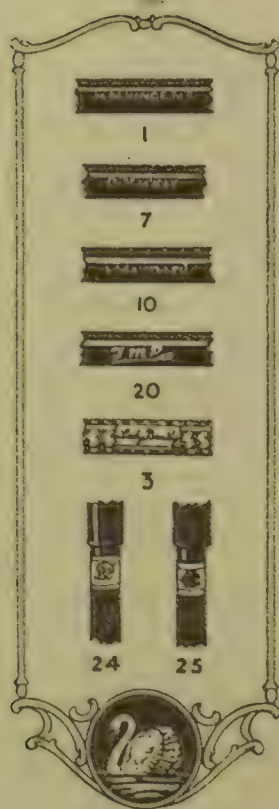
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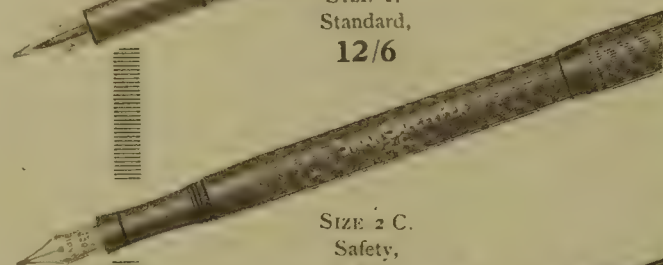
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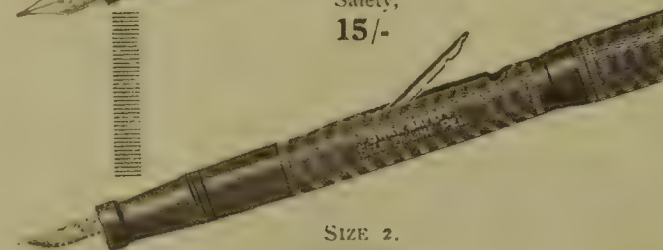
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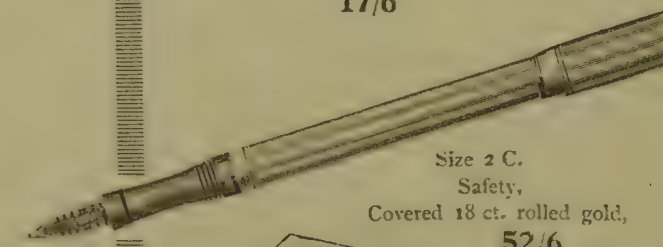
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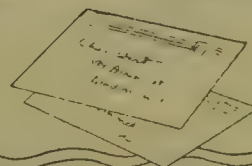
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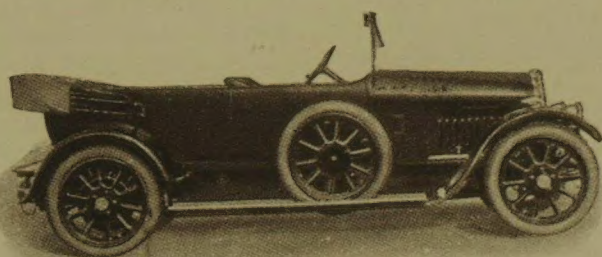
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"Go! It flew. Two hundred nights, if I'm a judge of a first show."

myself looking into the barrel of a revolver, held by one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen."

"Your luck was in, my boy," the actor interrupted with a smile.

"Was it?" Playfair replied. "Have you ever faced a revolver held by a woman? It is a most terrifying experience, and usually the revolver goes off."

"But this one didn't," he went on after a pause. "She was about the coolest woman I have ever stumbled across. The hand that held the revolver never trembled. She just stood, framed in the doorway, looking at me. I can see her white arms and shoulders now, with the darkness of the hall behind her."

"An effective entrance!" the actor commented.

"Quite. Her eyes were on my face—she had very beautiful eyes; and she asked me whether I liked her cloak. Fancy the situation, my dear chap. Alone in my rooms at two in the morning, and then quietly asking me if I liked her cloak!"

"I was too surprised to reply."

"'Won't you say good evening?' she asked with a smile. 'You seem surprised to see me.'"

"With that, she came into the room and sat down in my chair, still holding that wretched revolver tightly in her hand."

"'Won't you sit down?' she asked. 'You don't seem a bit comfortable standing up.'"

"I did so. I think I gathered courage from her coolness, and I made some remark in the bantering spirit she had used. She laughed, and announced that she was a burglar, and that I had interrupted her work. An amazing situation, my dear chap. Imagine a beautiful woman talking coolly to me at that hour! And remember, there was the revolver."

"Rather a fly in the ointment, the revolver," observed Murray.

"It was at this moment," Playfair went on, ignoring the interruption, "that my scattered wits became sufficiently collected to receive an idea,

and I suggested that I should make coffee. I had one of those machines with glass bowls, and I remember her watching my movements carefully as I lit the spirit lamp."

"She laughed lightly as she took the cup from the tray I held out. I sat in the chair opposite her and drank my coffee. Then I leaned over to replace my cup on the tray, and as I did so I flung myself on the revolver, which she had rested on the arm of her chair as she drank. It fell to the floor, and I recovered it."

"'Now, then, my lady,' I said, 'what about it?'"

"'It's mean of you,' she complained. 'It isn't sporting.'"

"She spoke as coolly as if she had been in her own drawing-room. There was the merest trace of annoyance on her face, otherwise she showed no emotion."

[Continued overleaf.]



"I flung myself on the revolver."

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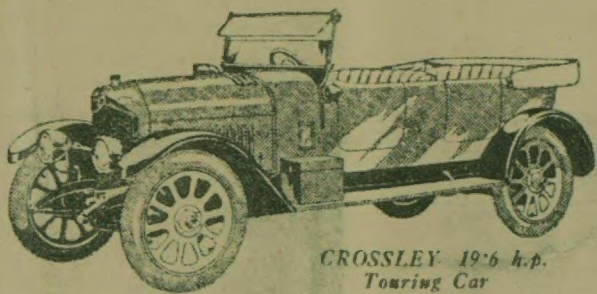
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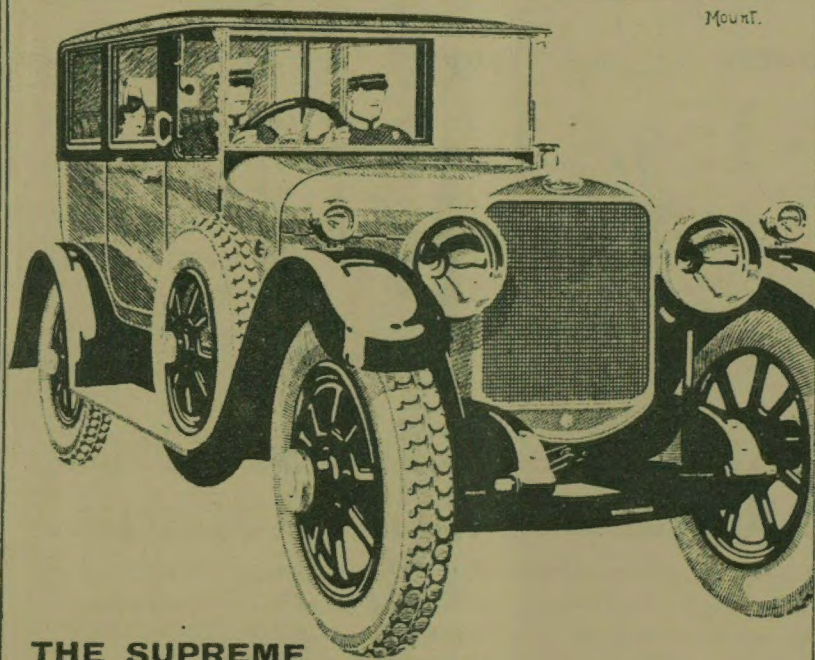


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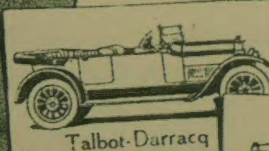
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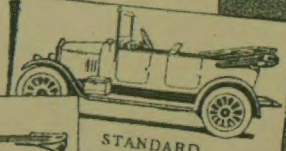
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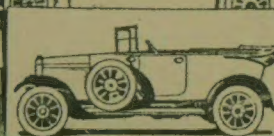
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"The fly disappears from the afore-mentioned ointment," the actor said, with a smile.

"Not at all—that's where you go wrong, my boy. I said she was cool. She looked up into my eyes, and her face rippled over with a smile.

"And so you really thought I was a burglar, Mr. Dramatist?" she asked. "Well, I'm not. I'm an actress. I saw your play last night, and the girl who plays 'The Woman Over the Way' is simply letting you down. I chose this means of demonstrating to you that I am the woman for the part, and now your meanness has spoiled everything."

"What was her name?" the actor put in sharply.

"Never you mind. I was impressed, I can tell you. She saw it, and she consolidated the ground she had won.

"If you look through your desk, Mr. Playfair, you will find that it has not been touched. And the revolver is, fortunately, unloaded. I see you don't know how to handle it, so it's just as well. Here is my card."

"She gave me an address in Kennington.

"May I call on you in the morning at the theatre?" she asked. I pointed out to her that business was not done that way, and that in all probability it would be difficult to get rid of the lady who was playing the part; but she had a way with her, and in the end I told her she might call.

"She thanked me with perfect self-control, and then she rose to go. My dear boy, she was *It!* I helped her into her cloak, and I held her



"She thanked me with perfect self-control, and then she rose to go."



"At the door she turned, like a queen, and held out her hand."

bag—of soft blue leather, I remember—while she put on her gloves. At the door she turned, like a queen, and held out her hand to me. I think the romance of the whole thing must have gripped me, for I bent over her hand and kissed it. She laughed lightly—she had a wonderful laugh—and then I took her down and put her in a taxi. And that was the last I ever saw of my beautiful visitor."

"But she turned up at the theatre, surely?"

"She didn't. That's the sting of the whole thing. When I got back to my study—I remember how oddly empty it seemed without her—I found that the desk *had* been rifled. My money was gone, and several articles of value besides. They must have been in the bag she asked me to hold as she put her gloves on. A great woman, my dear Murray! The whole game would have been up if I had taken her at her word and examined my desk, for I should have found out she was a thief. But she said it so magnificently that to doubt it would have been boorish. What an actress was lost in that woman!" Playfair sighed almost comically.

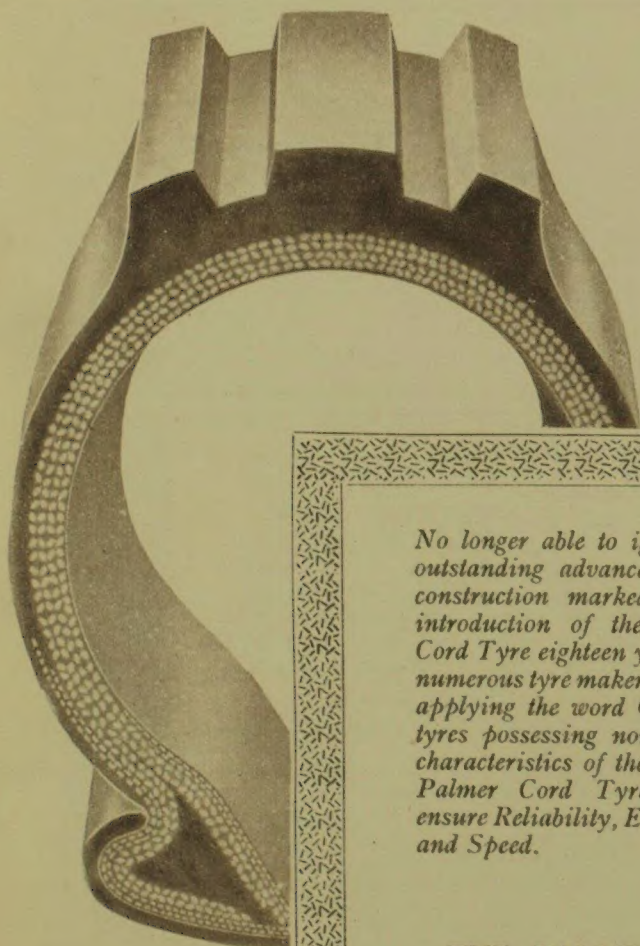
"She was very beautiful, you said?" asked Murray.

"Beautiful! She was *the* woman. And I have never seen her again."

"But you kissed her hand!" Murray said, with a smile. "You kissed her hand, remember!"

"It's a pity you are so cynical," Playfair said seriously. "Cynicism kills romance!"

To which remark the actor made no reply. He merely filled the other's glass—which was wise. [THE END.]



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